

REMARKS

The present application relates to hybrid maize plant and seed 36N70. Claims 1-32 are currently pending in the present application. Applicants respectfully request consideration of the following remarks.

Detailed Action

The Examiner has objected to claims 1, 5 and 7 for their inclusion of blank lines. The Examiner acknowledges Applicant's statement that the actual ATCC deposit will be delayed until the receipt of notice that the application is otherwise in condition for allowance. As provided in 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.801-1.809, Applicants wish to reiterate they will refrain from deposit of Hybrid 36N70 until allowable subject matter is indicated. Once such notice is received, an ATCC deposit will be made, and the specification will be amended to contain the accession number of the deposit, the date of the deposit, a description of the deposited biological material sufficient to specifically identify it and to permit examination and the name and address of the depository. The claims (1, 5 and 7) will also be amended to recite the ATCC deposit number. In addition, Applicants submit that at least 2,500 seeds of Variety 36N70 will be deposited with the ATCC. In view of this assurance, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, should be removed (MPEP § 2411.02). Such action is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 6, 8, 10-12, 14-16, 18, 19, 21, 23-25, 27-29 and 31-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regards as the invention.

Claim 6 stands rejected as being indefinite in its recitation of "the ... protoplasts" which lacks antecedent basis in claim 5 on which it depends. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. The use of the terminology "protoplasts" is included within claim 5 as stated "tissue culture of regenerable cells". Applicants further submit that a person having skill in the art would associate "protoplasts" with the "tissue culture of regenerable cells". Further, the specification states "the term plant includes plant cells, plant protoplasts, plant cell tissue cultures from which maize plants can be regenerated, plant calli, plant clumps, and plant cells that are intact in plants, or parts of plants, such as embryos, pollen, ovules, flowers, kernels, ears, cobs,

leaves, seeds, husks, stalks, roots, root tips, anthers, silk and the like" (page 37, specification). These are just a few of the examples of tissue cultures that are capable of producing somatic embryogenesis and plant regeneration. In addition, the physiology and morphology of the plant is described in Table 1 in the specification in a manner that one of ordinary skill in the art will clearly understand the plants and their derived tissue culture being claimed by the Applicants. However, in order to expedite prosecution Applicants have now amended claim 6 to read --of the tissue culture-- as suggested by the Examiner, thereby alleviating this rejection. The Examiner is thanked for the suggestion and claim 6 has been so amended.

Claims 8 and 21 are indefinite in their recitation "[t]he maize plant of claim 2 [or 20] wherein said plant is male sterile". Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Applicants note that large scale commercial hybrid maize production requires the use of some form of male sterility system which controls or inactivates the male fertility (page 2, specification). Applicants respectfully submit that the specification supplies an extensive description and definition of "male sterility" in the hybrid 36N70 (pages 2-4, specification). The present invention teaches how a "reliable method of controlling male fertility in plants offers the opportunity for improved plant breeding" (page 2, specification). It is essential to understand that a hybrid maize seed that is produced using cytoplasmic male-sterile (CMS) inbreds are "[p]lants ... are male sterile as a result of factors resulting from the cytoplasmic, as opposed to the nuclear, genome. Thus, this characteristic is inherited exclusively through the female parent in maize plants, since only the female provides cytoplasm to the fertilized seed. CMS plants are then fertilized with pollen from another inbred that is not male-sterile" (page 2, specification). Applicants respectfully submit that claims 8 and 21 clearly define and distinctly claim the subject matter Applicants regards as the invention. However, in order to expedite prosecution Applicants have now amended claims 8 and 21 to read --further comprising a genetic factor conferring male sterility-- as suggested by the Examiner, thereby alleviating this rejection. The Examiner is thanked for the suggestion.

Claims 10, 14, 18, 23, 27 and 31 are indefinite in their recitation of "[t]he maize breeding program of claim 9 [or 13 or 17 or 22 or 26 or 30]". Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. The claims and their dependents actually refer to previous claims which state "method for developing a maize plant in a maize breeding program". Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 10, 14, 18, 23, 27 and 31, and their dependents, are not indefinite and are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner states that claims 12, 16, 25 and 29 are indefinite in their recitation of "hybrid maize plant according to claim 2 [or 20] which lacks antecedent basis". Applicants have now amended claims 12, 16, 25 and 29 by deleting "hybrid" as suggested by the Examiner, thereby obviating this rejection.

Claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32 are indefinite in their recitation of "excellent", "good" and "suited", as the Examiner states these terms are unduly narrative and imprecise. Applicants traverse this rejection. Each of these claims recites two requirements, first that 36N70 be an ancestor of the plant and second, that the claimed plant be "capable of expressing a combination of at least two 36N70 traits" selected from a Markush grouping. Applicants note that the Markush listing is directed to "36N70" traits. Thus, Applicants submit that the recitation of 36N70 traits clearly delineates the traits listed as those which are from 36N70 or ancestors thereof. The recitation of "36N70" in front of the term traits clearly indicates that the traits must be originating from 36N70. This is particularly so since the claim also requires that the plant 36N70 must be an ancestor of the claimed plant. Applicants further submit that the adjectives used within the claims are not unduly narrative or imprecise as they do clearly characterize and positively recite the degree of expression of the particular traits within the application in Table 1 (pages 18-20). This terminology is well known in the art and commonly used within breeding techniques of hybrid plants. Applicants respectfully submit that this language is not narrative nor imprecise and would be understood by one in the art and is the terminology of use within the art. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration.

In light of the above remarks, Applicants submit that claims 6, 8, 10-12, 14-16, 18, 19, 21, 23-25, 27-29 and 31-32 clearly define and distinctly claim the subject matter Applicants regards as the invention. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Issues Under 35 U.S.C. § 102/103

Claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Johnson (U.S. Patent 6,046,387). The Examiner states the "claims are drawn to a maize plant exhibiting at least two traits which are exhibited by hybrid 36N70 such as excellent yield potential and suited to the Northcentral United States".

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and request reconsideration of claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32. The Applicants would like to point out that the inventions 36N70 and 17DHD7 are not the same inventions. Nor are their differences minor morphological variations. Applicants submit that the claimed plant cannot be rendered obvious or lacking novelty as it possesses a unique combination of traits which confers a unique combination of genetics.

The inventions 36N70 and 17DHD7 differ for various traits that are not minor. For example, 36N70 has more resistance to stalk lodging when compared with 17DHD7. As reported in Table 2A, 36N70 has a stalk lodging score of 8.3 (page 23). As reported in Table 1 of 6,046,387 Patent, 17DHD7 demonstrates a lower tolerance, with an average score of 4.7. Another example, as reported in Table 4, 36N70 has a growing degree unit of silk emergence of 1260 (page 35). As reported in Table 1 of the 6,046,387 Patent, 17DHD7 demonstrates a higher degree unit of 1493.2. A third example of the differences is that 36N70 exhibits a greater relative maturity than 17DHD7. As reported in Table 4, 36N70 has a comparative relative maturity of 101. As reported in Table 6, 17DHD7 has a relative maturity of 95.

Other traits which differ between the two inventions include: glume color (36N70 light green, 17DHD7 green), length of ear node leaf (36N70 91.3, 17DHD7 13.9), silk color (36N70 light green, 17DHD7 no teaching), Anthocyanin-pigmented brace roots (36N70 dark, 17DHD7 weak), resistance to Northern Leaf Blight (36N70 above average resistance, 17DHD7 no teaching), resistance to Stewart's Wilt (36N70 above average resistance, 17DHD7 no teaching) and resistance to Anthracnose Stalk Rot (36N70 above average resistance, 17DHD7 no teaching).

The aforementioned examples all illustrate that there are large differences between 36N70 and 17DHD7. The examples listed are not exhaustive but they do give ample evidence that the inventions are not the same. Furthermore, when looking at the tables of both inventions, hybrids created using 36N70 as one of the parents are clearly not anticipated by hybrids made using 17DHD7 as one of the parents.

Applicants further submit that the claims do not simply recite traits, but instead recites these specific traits only to the extent that they are "36N70" traits; thereby coming solely from the seed/germplasm of 36N70. When looking at maize plants it would be possible for one ordinarily skilled in the art to find many traits that are similar between varieties such as the disease resistance or growth habit. Nonetheless, the claim also recites that the claimed plant must have 36N70 as an ancestor further indicating that these traits must originate from the

36N70 plant not 17DHD7. In response to the Examiner's contention that one could not distinguish the claimed plant from the prior art which shows each of these traits, Applicants submit that one can easily tell by reference to the plants breeding history or its molecular profile whether the plant did indeed have plant 36N70 as an ancestor and expressed two or more "36N70" traits. Further, any phenotypic trait that is expressed is a result of a combination of all of the genetic material present in the plant, and 36N70 will have its own unique genetic background that will give rise to the claimed plant and this profile along with its combination with other plants will result in a unique combined genetic profile that is the product claimed.

Further, there is no expectation of success that the crossing of the Hybrid 17DHD7 with some yet to be identified plant would yield a plant with two of the traits enumerated in the claimed invention because that particular plant did not begin with the claimed seed 36N70 which is essential. Without any teaching about dominance, or heritability of such traits it cannot be said that there is an expectation of success that the combination of plants would achieve the combination enumerated in the claimed invention, to say nothing of issues such as inbreeding depression etc. Applicants assert that it is not the phenotypic characteristics alone that are claimed and taught in the instant invention. It is a combination of physiological and morphological characteristics, as claimed, which make the present Hybrid non-obvious and not anticipated over Powell. Further, In re Thorpe, states that "a product by process claim may be properly rejected over prior art teaching the same product produced by a different process", as noted by the Examiner. 227 U.S.P.Q. 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985). However, Applicants submit that this is not the same product physiologically or morphologically as the cited prior art as can be evidenced by one skilled in the art through analysis of the data tables in each. In addition, it is impermissible to use hindsight reconstruction and the benefit of Applicant's disclosure to pick among pieces which are present in the art, there must be some suggestion to make the combination and an expectation of success. In re Vaeck, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1434 (Fed. Cir. 1991). Thus, the present application deserves to be considered new and non-obvious compositions in their own right as products of crossing when 36N70 is used as a starting material.

In light of the above, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection to claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Johnson (U.S. Patent 6,046,387).

Issues Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Johnson (U.S. Patent 6,046,387). The Examiner states the "claims are drawn to a hybrid maize plant exhibiting all of the characteristics of 36N70".

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. When looking at a maize plant it would be possible to find many traits that are similar between varieties such as the color of flowers or growth habit. However, to say there are similarities in phenotype between two varieties is not the same as saying that the two varieties have the same morphological and physiological characteristics as a whole, or that one is an obvious variant of the other. Further, similarity in phenotype does not mean that the two varieties will perform similarly, particularly in a breeding program.

Applicants submit that Hybrid 17DHD7 does not exhibit the same characteristics as 36N70. Applicants will illustrate how 36N70 and 17DHD7 are different. Johnson does not teach or suggest hybrid maize plant 36N70 developed by a maize breeding program or the use of hybrid maize plant 36N70 in the production of tissue culture. It must be recognized that the hybrids provided by this invention are themselves unusual and unobvious results of a common process, in that they provide the unique combination of excellent yield potential, good stalk and root strength, very good stay green, very good tolerance to Anthracnose Stalk Rot and a relative maturity of 101 (see pages 17-20, specification). Thus, hybrid 36N70 deserves to be considered as a new and non-obvious composition in its own right as does its tissue culture as products of the process when 36N70 is used as starting material. Applicants point out that 36N70 is a unique plant hybrid which never before existed until Applicants filed the application and until its deposit of the same. While Johnson does teach the general regeneration of maize plants from tissue culture techniques, it does not teach or suggest the use of the unique maize hybrid 36N70. As will be demonstrated below, several morphological and physiological characteristics of hybrid 36N70 are either different from or not present in 17DHD7.

For example, hybrid 36N70 has above average resistance to Northern Leaf Blight and Stewart's Wilt while 17DHD7 does not teach or suggest any disease resistance. The varieties are also different with respect to glume color, length of ear node leaf, silk color, Anthocyanin of Brace Roots, tassel length, fresh husk color and disease resistance. Differences between the two varieties are summarized in the table below:

<u>CHARACTERISTICS</u>	<u>36N70</u>	<u>17DHD7</u>
Glume color	Light Green	Green
Length of ear node leaf (cm)	91.3	13.9
Silk color	Light green	No teaching
Anthocyanin of Brace Roots	Dark	Weak
Tassel length (cm)	57.8	31.0
Fresh husk color	Dark-green	Green
Disease Resistance	High resistance to Northern Leaf Blight, Stewart's Wilt and Anthracnose Stalk Rot	No teaching

This comparison clearly shows that 17DHD7 does not exhibit the characteristics of hybrid 36N70. Further, the present application clearly shows in Table 1 at p. 18-20 and Tables 2-4 that hybrid 36N70 exhibits a relative maturity of 101, excellent yield potential, good stalk and root strength, very good stay green, absent sheath pubescence, very good tolerance to Anthracnose Stalk Rot, and the aforementioned characteristics. This unique and unobvious combination of traits makes hybrid 36N70 particularly well suited to the Northwest, Northcentral and Northeast regions of the United States.

In light of the above, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection to claims 1-32 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Conclusion

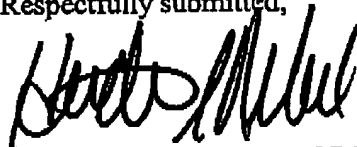
In conclusion, Applicants submit in light of the above amendments and remarks, the claims as amended are in a condition for allowance, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

No additional fees or extensions of time are believed to be due in connection with this amendment; however, consider this a request for any extension inadvertently omitted, and charge any additional fees to Deposit Account No. 26-0084.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made."

Reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Heidi S. Nebel, Reg. No. 37,719
McKee, Voorhees & Sease
801 Grand Avenue, Suite 3200
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2721
Phone No. (515) 288-3667
Fax No. (515) 288-1338
CUSTOMER NO: 27142

Attorneys of Record

- LA -

Application No. 09/759,709

**AMENDMENT — VERSION WITH MARKINGS
TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

In the Specification

Please replace the paragraph at page 37, beginning at line 32 with the following:

With the advent of molecular biological techniques that have allowed the isolation and characterization of genes that encode specific protein products, scientists in the field of plant biology developed a strong interest in engineering the genome of plants to contain and express foreign genes, or additional, or [modified]modified versions of native or endogenous genes (perhaps driven by different promoters) in order to alter the traits of a plant in a specific manner. Such foreign, additional and/or modified genes are referred to herein collectively as "transgenes". Over the last fifteen to twenty years several methods for producing transgenic plants have been developed, and the present invention, in particular embodiments, also relates to transgenic versions of the claimed hybrid maize line 36N70.

In the Claims

Claims 5, 6, 8, 12, 16, 21, 25 and 29 have been amended as follows:

5. (Amended)

A tissue culture of regenerable cells of a hybrid maize plant 36N70, representative seed of said hybrid maize plant 36N70 having been deposited under ATCC accession number _____, wherein the tissue culture regenerates plants capable of expressing all the morphological and physiological characteristics of said hybrid maize plant 36N70.

6. (Amended)

A tissue culture according to claim 5, [the] cells or protoplasts of the tissue culture being from a tissue selected from the group consisting of leaves, pollen, embryos, roots, root tips, anthers, silks, flowers, kernels, ears, cobs, husks, and stalks.

8. (Amended)

The maize plant of claim 2 [wherein said maize plant is male sterile] , further comprising a genetic factor conferring male sterility.

12. (Amended)

A [hybrid] maize plant according to claim 2, wherein the genetic material of said plant [contains] further comprises one or more transgenes.

16. (Amended)

A [hybrid] maize plant according to claim 2, wherein the genetic material of said plant [contains] further comprises one or more genes transferred by backcrossing.

21. (Amended)

The maize plant of claim 20 [wherein said maize plant is male sterile] , further comprising a genetic factor conferring male sterility.

25. (Amended)

A [hybrid] maize plant according to claim 20, wherein the genetic material of said plant [contains] further comprises one or more transgenes.

29. (Amended)

A [hybrid] maize plant according to claim 20, wherein the genetic material of said plant [contains] further comprises one or more genes transferred by backcrossing.